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CUSTOMS  
OF  
THE CANALINO

BY  
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## CUSTOMS OF THE CANALINO

### INTRODUCTION

Our knowledge of the customs and habits of ancient people is gained primarily from two sources:—the archaeological record—artifacts, burial customs, village arrangement, and weapons, and from the ethnological record—the reports of early explorers and study of living representatives, if any. From the latter we may gain a knowledge impossible to be learned from the former. The songs, language and beliefs can only be completely preserved in a written record.

The archaeological record may tell us, for instance, that the people lived upon acorns, for we find their mortars and pestles used in grinding these plants. We know from the presence of fishhooks that they caught fish, but unless we find the bones of the fish we cannot tell which kind of fish was caught, except by the report of eye witnesses. Early raconteurs tell us that many plants other than acorns were used in the diet, but these plants have left no trace in the archaeological record.

Just as the police solve crimes from the clues and accounts of witnesses, so we determine the story of the past from our artifact clues and the explorer witnesses. Clues may be interpreted in different ways and witnesses may disagree. We then must be the judge and jury and decide the issue. Kroeber<sup>1</sup> in his excellent "Handbook of the Indians of California", says "There is no group in the State that once held the importance of the Chumash concerning which we know so little."

Much of what we know we have learned through interpretations of the artifacts and the conditions under which they were found. The rest has come from the reports of the early explorers. Some of these old documents have lain hidden for years and only recently come to light. Others, doubtless, are still unavailable, and from these it may be possible later to bridge the gaps.

Just as two modern eye-witnesses disagree on the circumstances of a particular case, so our early raconteurs differed. Usually these men were soldiers, priests or sailors and their accounts are colored by their interests. Thus Fages, the soldier, constantly refers to danger from attack, while Crespi the priest, remarks upon the number of Indians to be "reduced", and from the Cabrillo journal come numerous accounts of weather and the sea-faring activity of the people.

Inaccuracies have crept into the accounts, either through translations or misunderstandings of language or signs. For example: the Cabrillo account says that the Indians had many "cows" and much "maise". As we know they had neither, we must assume that the sign for "deer" was mistaken for "cows", and the sign for "food", or "acorns", mistaken for "corn".

<sup>1</sup> Kroeber, 1925, p. 550.

In spite of inaccuracies and lack of observations much valuable and interesting material, which could not be secured from any other source, is contained in these old records. It is only to be regretted that more of the *padres* did not record the customs and habits of the culture they destroyed.

#### THE CANALINO

If we know something of the physical and mental make-up of a people, we can better understand their habits and beliefs. From all accounts, and skeletons substantiate this, the *Canalinos* were a comparatively short people, well set up physically, wearing their hair long but bound up with a cord. They were well formed and of good proportions. The women were fairly good looking and wore the front hair short and banged, the rest falling over their shoulders.

To Font, the people of San Luis Obispo appeared better and cleaner than those of the Channel, "But those (Channel) Indians are not so good featured and clean as these of San Luis, for these, besides having good features, have well rounded eyes, lively, bright, black and rather large. Their color is between dark and light and is agreeable, and they are Indians with almost as good features as the Spaniards. They are neat and clean, the men as well as the women, so far as is possible to such a class of people; and they are not offensive to the smell as the other Indians."<sup>1</sup>

In speaking of the women of Ventura, he said they were shy, but that the San Luis women were affable.

Font reported that the Indians of the Islands had reddish hair, although of the same people as those of the mainland. This must be considered as a family trait of those referred to, or an exaggeration of the color.<sup>2</sup>

Fages summed up the traits of these people by saying:

"The Indians of all these villages are of good disposition and average figure; they are inclined to work, and much more to self-interest. They show with great covetousness a certain inclination to traffic and barter, and it may be said in a way that they are the Chinese of California. In matters concerning their possessions, they will not yield or concede the smallest point. They receive the Spaniards well and make them welcome; but they are very warlike among themselves, living at almost incessant war, village against village."<sup>3</sup>

One sentence in Fages' description perhaps explains the manner in which they received the derogatory name of "Digger" and the debased position it implies in the minds of present day white men. "They received the Spaniards well and made them welcome . . ." Fages said.

<sup>1</sup> Bolton, 1930, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Properly there are no redheaded Indians. Numerous cases of redheaded mummies have been found, notably that of Mammoth Cave. Hair is subject to fading and thus accounts for these.

<sup>3</sup> Priestley, 1937, p. 31.

After a century of "reduction" by the Padres, in which they were taken from their homes and confined in quarters in the Mission compound, where they were compelled to work in the fields or as personal servants for the soldiers of the Presidio, the diseases of the white man took their toll and by the time the Americans arrived, fresh from battles with the Sioux and Apache, but a pitiful handful of the original 10,000 Indians of the district remained.

These remnants of a once great people had degenerated into a slovenly drunken lot, eking out a bare existence, and were more to be pitied than condemned. To these few, the name "Digger" was applied, as it was to the other California tribes. The name presumably referred to their habit of digging roots.

#### CLOTHING AND ADORNMENT

The matter of clothing, or the lack of it, has been in much confusion, for this is a matter in which the eye-witnesses do not agree. It is necessary to consider the evidence in the light of other factors.

Fages, in 1769, wrote that the Indians wore capes or doublets of antelope skin reaching to the waist, and he also mentions the profusion of water and food. Font, six years later, says the Indians went in "stark nudity" and also mentions the scarcity of food. By his omission of the mention of streams we may assume that the year 1775 was dry and hot, as contrasted to a wet cool year of 1769. Therefore it would seem apparent that clothing was worn for warmth and protection, rather than for style or modesty.

An exception to this theory of weather must be noted in the Cabrillo journal of 1542, in which the author describes the mainlanders as going "clothed in the skins of animals," while the islanders wore no clothing and slept on the ground. Yet Cabrillo, while wintering on the islands, experienced snow.

Fages also says that the Indians between Los Angeles and San Diego wore no clothes with but few exceptions—these wore a "sleeveless doublet of twisted rabbit or otter skins reaching to the waist." Of the Canalino, Fages says ". . . they go clothed with a large cloak made of the skins of coney, hare, fox or sea otter, the garment reaching to the waist, the captain only being allowed to wear it reaching to the ankle, without other marks of distinction."

Six years later we have the testimony of Father Font, who said that "The dress of the men is total nakedness. For adornment only they are in the habit of wearing around the waist a string or other gewgaw which covers nothing." While at Rincon he says he saw a few among the men with a little cape of bear skin like a doublet, reaching to the waist, and by this mark of distinction these were the owners of the launches.<sup>2</sup>

It would appear that Fages' reference to "Captains" corresponds to Font's owners of launches, and not to the chiefs of the village.

On this matter of dress, we have the agreement of several witnesses that at

<sup>1</sup> Bolton, 1930, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

the dances the men were naked, except for a heavy coat of paint. The archaeological evidence is wanting in most cases, but in the later Canalino graves evidence exists which shows that a type of dress was used which is not spoken of by any of the explorers. This is a grass skirt which the women wore about their waist, reaching to the knees, and each blade of grass weighted down by a small pinch of asphalt. Only the asphalt remains today as a clue to this form of dress.

Summing up, we must assume that clothing was worn or discarded as the weather or the whim suited; that as far as we know it was quite limited, ranging from a cloak or skirt of various kinds to simply a few "gewgaws."

A popular story of feather cloaks (one of which was supposed to have been possessed by the lone woman of San Nicolas) reported from time to time as having been found in some mountain cave, leads one to imagine a gorgeous creation similar to that of the Hawaiian chiefs. Nothing could be further from the truth. The feather cloaks, in this case, were common to a greater part of California and were made by twisting strips of bird skins and sewing or weaving the strips into a garment or blanket. The same system was applied to rabbit and other small mammals, and the result, while warm and durable, hardly a thing of beauty.

The women are reported to have worn a skirt of deer or antelope hide, either colored or white, which did not reach below the knees. These were decorated with trinkets of stone or shell. Hats were worn at San Luis Obispo—at least. These were described as being "trays" but were likely the small skull cap of basketry common in California.

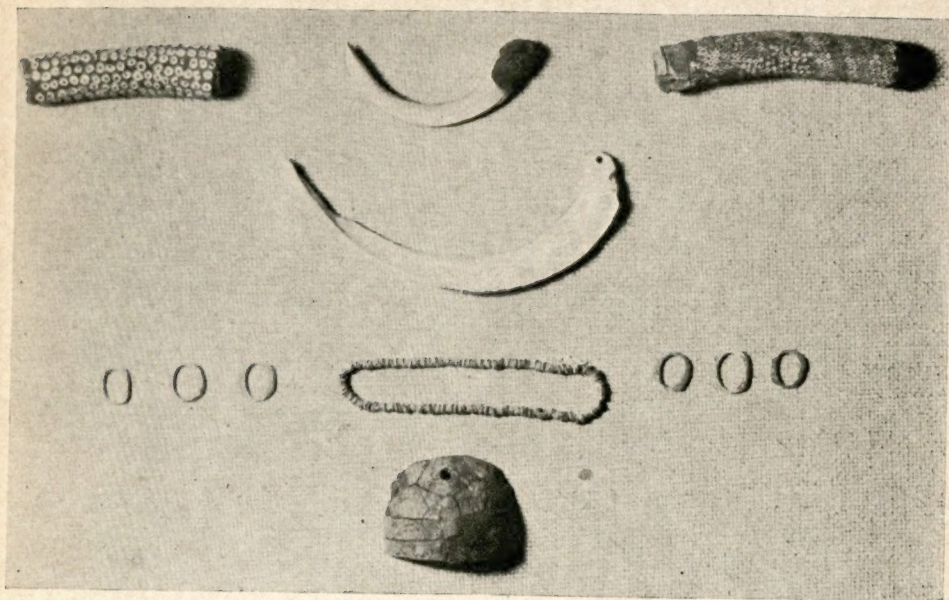
To reconstruct the Canalino warrior, we may visualize him as follows: Height under six feet; sturdy, but not fat; light complected as compared to the Mexican Indians; features well-proportioned; hair dark and straight and well kept.

He wore a vest-like garment of skin with a string of shell or bone beads about the waist, while around his neck were three or four strands of shell beads, with possibly the addition of some steatite or bone beads.

The hair was either cut close to the pate or banged in front with a queue behind, and in the fore part of the hair a knife with flint blade and inlaid wooden handle. His nose was pierced, but he did not necessarily wear rings. In the pierced ears were worn "canes, which look like two horns" as thick as the little finger and about as long. In these they carried tobacco and other possessions.

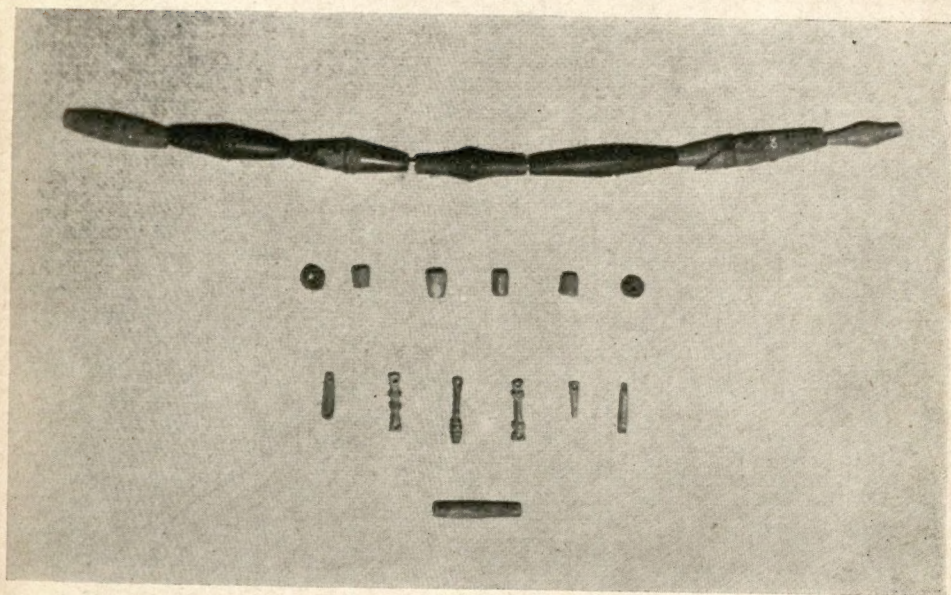
Face and body were generously painted with red, black and white paint. When on the hunt or ready for war he carried a short sinew bound bow and a quiver of arrows. The arrows were of wood, not cane, and were tipped with flint, bound with sinew and set in asphalt.

The well dressed Canalino woman wore a short, ill-fitting skirt of untanned deer skin, sometimes stained red, the bottom decorated with pendants of abalone shell about one inch long, and with decorations of shell and steatite ornaments. Several strings of small shell beads, earrings and possibly a nose ring completed her dress. Like her modern sister she painted profusely, especially for the dance.

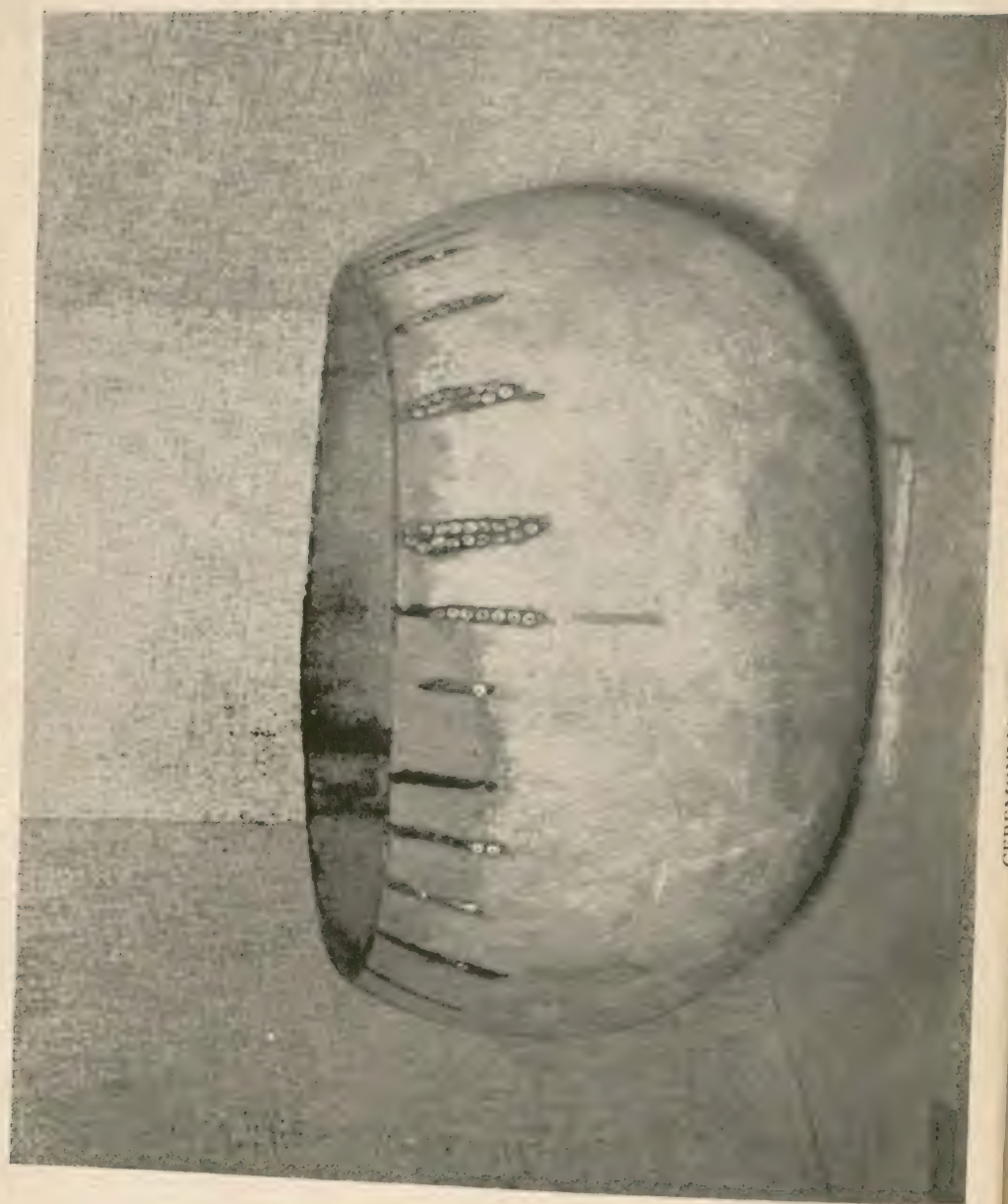


# ARTIFACTS FROM MESCALITAN ISLAND

UPPER LEFT: *Shell inlay on bone tube*  
 UPPER CENTER: *Boar's tooth*  
 CENTER: *Abalone pendant*  
 LOWER RIGHT AND LEFT: *Limpet calluses*  
 BOTTOM: *Turtle shell rattle*



# STONE BEADS AND PENDANTS



CEREMONIAL BOWT FROM CEMETEDA

Her hair was banged in front, but the tresses fell over the shoulders and she took great pride in her hair.

That this hair dress, like that of the modern woman, varied from time to time, is shown by the variety of accoutrements found in the graves of different periods. On Mescalitan Island great disks of abalone shell were found, some four inches in diameter, which were worn around the head in conjunction with a dozen thin bone hair pins. At another time limpet shells were the favorite method of putting up the hair.

Some of the women at least wore a small basketry skull cap, which was worn to protect the forehead from the cords of the heavy carrying nets and baskets.

Nothing is known of the footwear upon the mainland. In one or two cases sandals made of rushes have been reported from the caves on the islands. It is possible, but not at all certain, that these may have been more common than the archaeological record would indicate.

What Font called "gewgaws" are too numerous to mention. Mostly made of shell and bone, with a few of stone, they comprise a list of hundreds of items, varying in detail. Of these the *Olivella* shell necklaces were perhaps the most common—small beads not over a quarter of an inch in diameter with a hole in the center, strung together. These same beads were used at certain stages, notably at Mescalitan as inlay work.

Abalone shell was a popular material from which various beads, pendants and other items of adornment were made. Steatite beads were made from very thin disks, hard to distinguish from the *Olivella* beads with which they were strung. Also globular and ovoid beads up to one half inch in diameter, and long, tubular beads as much as five inches long, usually tapered to the end and often carved or inlaid with shell. Pendants of stone, usually teardrop in form but sometimes carved in intricate shapes, were sometimes encountered.

#### HOUSES AND VILLAGES

The villages of the Canalino were many. They were scattered along the coast from Malibu to San Luis Obispo, but were especially thick in the area from Carpinteria to Goleta, where there have been twenty-five to thirty villages. These were not all inhabited at one time, although some have doubtless been occupied almost continuously by Indian or white man from the time of the Oak Grove up to the present day.

That some of these villages were abandoned at various times we can note from the chronicles of Fages, Font and Crespi, who mention the location of a village in one case, while the other remarks that it is abandoned. Some of these abandoned villages were probably temporary camps, while others had been raided by war parties and the inhabitants either killed or driven away.

Excavations tend to substantiate this conclusion, differences often being noted in the habits or customs of an excavated village site or cemetery from its nearby neighbor which can be due only to an element of time.

It is not likely that time played a part in the architecture of the houses of the Canalino. Cabrillo, Fages, Font and other explorers agree in substance as to the nature of the houses, although not agreeing as to their size. These houses were of grass or thatching upon a willow frame, set in the ground in a circle and bent over to join at the top, the whole framework being lashed together with fibre or sinew. The thatching was applied to the outside by the use of a large bone or wood "thaching needle", several examples of which have been found. Cabrillo implies that the houses were sometimes covered with matting, which was certainly used at the doors and for interior partitions.

A hole was left in the top for smoke, light and ventilation, while a door, and sometimes two, was in the side. Some of the Indians, especially those of San Luis Obispo, also had windows in their houses.

The floors of houses discovered indicate an average size of approximately sixteen to twenty feet in diameter. Cabrillo says "there were houses on the island which held fifty people." Several other accounts indicate houses of up to fifty feet in diameter which housed as many as the fifty people mentioned by Cabrillo, or three or four families in other cases.

Another early traveler indicates that there were eight to ten people per dwelling, all being closely related. The fact that none of the remains of these larger houses have been found is not conclusive of their non-existence. Even though the floor of such a dwelling is found in excavating, it might not be recognized as such, for the length of these trenches is seldom fifty feet long.

Father Font describes the doors as being double, consisting of a mat on the inside and one on the outside, similar to our modern method of a regular and a screen door. The outside door was barred with a whale bone or stick. The inside of the houses consisted of a fireplace in the center. The bed was made on a raised platform of rush mats and a rolled mat served as a pillow, while other mats were used to hang around the bed or other section of the house for privacy or additional warmth. According to Cabrillo, the islanders slept on the ground.

All in all, the Canalino built the best houses on the coast. According to Fages, the Shoshones inland from Ventura did not have houses. He mentioned camps, or villages of several hundred people, without any dwellings.

#### TEMESCAL

The temescal, or sweathouse, of the Canalino was apparently an important adjunct to the community, as it was with many of the California Indians. To Font we are indebted for the best though somewhat meager description of this structure. He says:<sup>1</sup>

"They also have a common temescal. This is a hot, closed room for sweating, made somewhat subterranean and very firm with poles and earth, and having at the top, in the middle, an opening like a scuttle, to afford

<sup>1</sup> Bolton, 1930, p. 254.

air and to serve as a door, through which they go down inside by a ladder consisting of straight poles set in the ground and joined together, one being shorter than the other. I peeped into a temescal and perceived a strong heat coming up from it. In the middle of them they make a fire. The Indians enter to perspire, seated all around, and as soon as they perspire freely and wet the ground with their sweat, they run out and jump into the sea, which is close by, to bathe themselves."

Fages,<sup>1</sup> speaking of the Indians near Monterey, describes them as having a "kind of bath", saying:

"... although I do not know whether it deserves the name or not... They erect a hut of branches, stakes and fagots, after the fashion of an oven, without any air passage whatever. The Indian gets into it, and others make a fire for him with small pieces of wood near the door, and the one inside receives a good scorching for an hour, during which he perspires copiously, scraping himself with the poniard or spatula... This done, he comes out quickly, and goes to wash himself all over in cold water wherever he may first find it. They have a custom of repeating this alternation, the first bath being in the morning, the others being at mid-day and at night. The women do not use these baths."

Many of these spatulas or sweat sticks have been recovered from the ancient village sites, so that it is likely this portion of Fages' account is also applicable to the Canalinos.

#### POPULATION AND SIZE OF VILLAGES

The village located on the present site of Ventura, which was called "Pueblo de la Asumpta" by the Portolá expedition, was reported in 1769 to contain thirty houses with over 400 people. Rincon creek was described as more populous, while Carpinteria had some thirty-two houses. In "Pueblo de la Laguna," which is the site of modern Santa Barbara near the old lagoon, there were 800 people. In the Goleta area, Fages reports the village on Mescalitan Island as being composed of 100 houses, with larger towns on the shore of the slough. On a basis of ten persons per house this would indicate a population of 1000 people which he estimated.

"San Luis Obispo de Tolosa", which is probably the present Dos Pueblos,<sup>2</sup> contained 1000 people, while a place called "San Guido" had eighty houses and 800 people.. "San Luis Rey," now called Gaviota, had fifty "fires". The town at the mouth of Bullito Creek up the coast from Gaviota contained twenty-four houses with 200 people, and "Pueblo del Cojo" at Point Concepcion was of equal size.

Fages estimated that in the "five Channel towns which lie side by side there

<sup>1</sup> Priestley, 1937, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> There may be some doubt as to this location as Tecolote Creek also fits the description equally well.

were 6000 people." Kroeber<sup>1</sup> gives the Chumash population of 1770 as 10,000. This figure would include all Indians from Malibu to San Luis Obispo.

The villages of the Canalino were generally located on or near salt water, with a preference for nearby fresh water, which in some cases was more than a mile away from camp. The high bluffs along the channel were a favorite location as well as the lower land near the estuaries. Little is known of any definite arrangement of the villages. Whether the houses were in orderly street arrangement, or only haphazard, is not known. That the cemetery and the adulatory were located near the village is definitely established. Cemeteries were sometimes located on high ground—in other cases in low ground. Nothing is left to indicate the place of the adulatory, but there is ample evidence from the early chronicles of its existence.

#### CEMETERIES

Unlike the nearby Shoshones, the Canalino had definite cemeteries which in all cases were near the village, if not in it. The cemeteries were plainly marked by poles and "boards" or by whale bone projecting from the ground. This is amply indicated by reports and by actual excavations. At the present time, none of these remain above the surface, having been entirely effaced by vandals, erosion and cultivation, but as recently as 1875, many of the whale bones still remained above ground.

These were described by the Spaniards as high poles, painted bright colors, the hair of the dead Indians hanging from the poles, together with objects indicating their trade. Thus a warrior's bow and arrow might hang from a pole over his grave, while a group of baskets would indicate a woman.

This custom seems to have been a trait of the later Canalino only—before the arrival of Cabrillo and up until the time of their Christianization. In older cemeteries, no indication of this custom is in evidence. True, wood does not last, but whale bone beneath the surface remains as well preserved as human bones. There are many other different factors in the burial custom of this earlier period which are apparent upon excavation, but we know nothing of the method of marking graves on the surface.

#### BURIAL

Of the burial customs we must learn most from excavations. Fortunately, unlike the religious beliefs, we have concrete evidence, but we must still rely upon early accounts for the actual ceremony, which doubtless changed as much during the history of the Canalino as did the habits of burial.

The Chumash alone of the neighboring tribes buried their dead. The Salinans, Shoshones, and Yokuts buried and burned their dead, but they had no common burial ground.

During the early phases of the Canalino, the custom was to bury the dead in definite arrangement. No markers were placed over the graves which have

<sup>1</sup> Kroeber, 1925, p. 883.

endured, and little was made in the way of offerings. Heads were generally pointing in a westerly direction, and bodies nearly all face down and flexed—that is, legs drawn up, hands under the chest.

In the later period, reburial was practiced, several bodies being removed to make room for a new one. Offerings were put in the graves. These offerings took the form of bowls, weapons, beads, and sometimes seeds. The best description of the ceremony is given by Fages.<sup>1</sup>

"When any Indian dies, they carry the body to the adulatory, or place near the village dedicated to their idols. There they celebrate the mortuary ceremony, and watch all the following night, some of them gathered about a huge fire until daybreak; then come all the rest (men and women), and four of them begin the ceremony in this wise. One Indian, smoking tobacco in a large stone pipe, goes first; he is followed by the other three, all passing thrice around the body; but each time he passes the head, his companions lift the skin with which it is covered, that the priest may blow upon it three mouthfulls of smoke. On arriving at the feet, they all four together stop to sing I know not what manner of laudation. Then come the near and remote relatives of the deceased, each one giving to the chief celebrant a string of beads, something over a span in length. Then immediately there is raised a sorrowful outcry and lamentation from all the mourners. When this sort of solemn response is ended, the four ministers take up the body, and all the Indians follow them, singing, to the cemetery which they have prepared for the purpose, where it is given sepulture; with the body are buried some little things made by the deceased person himself; some other objects are deposited round about the spot where the body rests, and over it, thrust into the earth, is raised a spear or very long rod, painted in various colors. At the foot of this rod are left a few relics, which naturally represent the ability and kind of occupation which the man had while he was living. If the deceased is a woman, they leave strung on the rod some of the boxes and baskets, which she was accustomed to weave."

Kroeber<sup>2</sup> says that one man carried the body and made the grave. This practice indicates a belief in defilement, common with many other tribes. The widow observed food restrictions for a year and wore the husband's hair on her head. For prominent men, masts bearing the possessions of the dead or tall boards bearing rude pictures were erected.

#### RELIGION AND SUPERSTITION

As might be expected, less actual knowledge is possessed of the spiritual side of the Indians than any other. This is natural, for religion and superstition, having no foundation in material fact, are difficult to explain in all their rami-

<sup>1</sup> Priestley, 1937, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Kroeber, 1925, p. 557.

fications. Neither is much left in the way of artifacts which explains their beliefs.

If, a thousand years from now, a new race were to excavate one of our churches, they would note the cross as being of significance, but it is doubtful if they would be able to interpret the origin of its significance.

Many articles are found in archaeological excavations which show a definite use. The use of others is less plain. By a process of elimination, articles for which there is no apparent use, either as tools or ornaments, are apt to be classed as ceremonial. In many cases later information proves these correct. On the other hand, an article may sometimes appear to have been used for some everyday use, only to find that it was actually a ceremonial object. Charmstones were regarded by many anthropologists as plummets, but the work of Henshaw, Yates and others has shown these to be entirely of ceremonial significance.

The first account of religious beliefs comes from the Cabrillo journal<sup>1</sup> which stated that the Indians worshipped pictures on posts. Two possibilities suggest themselves—a graveyard with the upright grave markers, colored baskets, and painted sticks which might have appeared like "pictures on posts", and the *E-sho-ish*, the crop protector, a painted stick with feathers fastened to it which was worshipped and supposed to protect the crops.

Father Font<sup>2</sup> says that they lived without knowledge of God while Fages<sup>3</sup> says:

"They are idolators like the rest. Their idols are placed near the village, with some here and there about the fields, to protect, they say, the seeds and crops. These idols are nothing but sticks, or stone figurines painted with colors and surmounted with plumage. Their ordinary height is three hands and they place them in the cleanest, most highly embellished place they can find, whither they go frequently to worship them and offer their food, and whatever they have."

Modern anthropologists have been unable to determine very much more. Kroeber<sup>4</sup> points out the possibility that the *Chungichnish* religion, which uses the toloache plant that flourished on Santa Catalina Island, was brought to the Santa Barbara region with steatite. Small objects made of steatite, and probably of ceremonial significance, are found on both island and mainland, but on the other hand, he indicated that the use of the plummet-shaped charmstones suggested an affinity with the Great Valley. A missionary report of 1810 mentions the worship of the god *Achup* or *Chupu* as having been uprooted.

#### SHAMANS

What part the shaman, or medicine man, played in the religion we don't know, but in other matters he was doubtless powerful—at least during phases of the history of the Canolino. The charmstone is perhaps the outstanding

<sup>1</sup> Henshaw, 1879, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> Bolton, 1930, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> Priestley, 1937, p. 32-33.

<sup>4</sup> Kroeber, 1925, p. 567.

example of this superstition in connection with the shamans. A long thin cigar-shaped stone, resembling a plumb bob, without the rounded end. Both ends are usually alike, but a few are drilled, others notched.

The origin of these stones is not known. That they occur in the Hunting People culture has been mentioned. They also occur in the late phases of the Canalino. The modern Indians professed to have no knowledge of their use, yet Yates, Rogers and Henshaw succeeded in getting admissions which were almost identical.

This admission was that the stones were medicine or sorcery stones and were very powerful. Yates<sup>1</sup> describes the use of the stones at Santa Barbara as being arranged twenty in a circle, the shaman then punching them violently together, sprinkling water over them until "smoke issued from them." At Ventura substantially the same ceremony was used, with the exception that twelve stones were used, exclusive of the center stone which was a different type. This center stone was called *Tu-cait*. The one shown Yates by the Indians was a

"flattish round, beach-worn pebble of quartzite unworked and stained black with iron. It has, as I was told, a peculiar power in rain making, and as an evidence of its power, the Indian held it for a few moments tightly grasped in his hands, when moisture was visible on it, caused by contact with the moist hand."

At Ventura, twelve stones were arranged in a circle close together. In the center was *Tu-cait*, chia seeds, the breast down of the white goose being spread over the stones, then red ochre, and around this a dance was held while three old men sang and kept time with rattles. This ceremony was supposed to cure the sick, bring rain, put out forest fires, bring fish and help in war.

Other uses of the charmstones are known from other tribes and it is likely that some of these were also utilized by the Canalino. A charmstone placed on a rocky ledge in the mountain, or over a stream, would go through the air or water and drive the game or the fish to the hunters or, in war time, would harass the enemy. If a warrior wore one about his neck, he was protected from arrows, while if he bit the stone, he would become invisible.

According to Rafael Solaris, the last representative of a village in Santa Ynez, the medicine man, after fasting for one month and abstaining from the use of fatty substance and drinking several cups of a concoction they called *Tol-wach-ie*, was in proper condition to make use of the charms.

Another form, classed as a charmstone, is the figurine, or effigy, often in the form of a whale, sometimes a fish, while it is difficult to imagine what some represent. Juan de Jesus, a Ventura Indian, said these represented idols; that feathers were tied on the ends and placed in a basket in the house of the medicine man. People desirous of favors filled the baskets with seeds or offerings until the idols were covered.

<sup>1</sup> Yates, 1889, p. 300.

Justo, a Santa Barbara Indian, stated that the charmstones were scattered, some covered up while others were placed on the surface of the ground.

It is questionable whether all of these charmstones were made locally. It has been suggested that the Canalino did not make them but that they were made by an earlier people. This perhaps ties up with the story told to Mr. D. B. Rogers by an Indian to the effect that the charmstones were "alive" and burrowed under the ground and that they were evil until "purified" by the proper ceremony.

One significant fact stands out in relation to their origin. Few are made from stone native to this region. One, made of iron pyrite, was said to have been found at Dos Pueblos, and another of specular iron. Against this foreign origin theory we have two charmstones joined together and unfinished from Las Llagas.

Little mention has been made of the "temples" or other sacred edifices. In his excavations at Las Llagas, Rogers<sup>1</sup> reports the finding of a circular structure about twenty feet in diameter, barricaded by boulders, and on the edge of the cemetery. In the pit was evidence of fire and two "sunbursts" of charmstones, while within the circle were graves in which charmstones were plentiful but not arranged in any order. Rogers believed that the graves had encroached upon a "temple". Each of these "sunbursts" contained ten stones arranged about a central stone which rested in a small cup-shaped boulder. This arrangement is essentially that as outlined by Yates as in use at Ventura and Santa Barbara. The time element is different, however, for Yates speaks of the Historic period, while that of Las Llagas is that of the early part of the late Canalino.

#### MARRIAGE

While it lacked both religious and civil ceremony, the system of marriage seems well established. A man could have but one wife. When she died he could then remarry, but only with a widow. Likewise with the women. The chief could have two wives and could dispose of them at will, taking new wives, but only maidens. Adultery was the only ground recognized for divorce. This custom seems to be quite universal among the coast Indians.

The suitor paid no dowry, nor received one, but insinuated himself into the family by showing his ability to provide. The marriage ceremony was simple but barbaric. Fages reports that when a man and woman were seen at the village at dawn, with face and body savagely scratched, they were regarded as married. The padres had great difficulty in breaking this custom at Monterey, even after a Catholic wedding.

#### POLITICS

For the politics of the Chumash, we must look to the early accounts. Fages reports a simple political system, one man in each village being chosen for his leadership to serve for life as captain of the military activities. His duties seemed

<sup>1</sup> Rogers, 1927, p. 217-218.

to be limited to the planning of the raids or defences of the village, a council of all villagers assisting. The captains had total independence in the government and collected taxes from all the villagers. They had the privilege of having two wives and of disposing of them at will and replacing them by maidens.

That men were not always chosen as the leaders was indicated by Cabrillo who reported an old woman as "princess" of the village known as "Pueblo de las Sardinias" or *Cicacut*. Cabrillo implied a more complicated system of government than later explorers. He reported that the villages of the channel comprised two provinces—*Xucu* extending from "Pueblo de las Canoas" to *Cicacut*, and *Xexo* from *Cicacut* to Point Concepcion.<sup>1</sup>

One writer states that the chief had no authority, but nearly all informants indicate that the chief was honored and respected.<sup>2</sup> Font<sup>3</sup> says that they lived without law or king, yet his trip was but a few years later than that of Fages.

#### WARFARE

A mistaken belief exists that the Channel Indians were peaceful. This originated largely because the Indians did not resist the whites until it was too late—a common occurrence among nearly all tribes.

Fages,<sup>4</sup> in speaking of the Indians of San Luis Obispo, says that they seldom slept in their houses for fear of attack, but rather congregated in numbers in "great subterranean caves", because if they stayed at home they might be surprised by their enemies. They also congregated to keep watch and to plan traps and were "a warlike people, always roaming from village to village at odds with everyone."

As there are no caves in this region which fit the description given by Fages, it is apparent that the Indians constructed shelters similar, perhaps, to the enclosures with secret tunnels said to have been used by the Indians near San Diego.

Font describes their weapons as the bow, with carefully made arrows of wood. The bows were small, but very strong, and wound with tendons.

It is interesting to note that while thousands upon thousands of arrowheads are found in the region, only one Canalino bow is known to exist. This was collected by Captain Vancouver and is now supposed to be in the British Museum.

Another insight into the warfare is gained from Font who says of Buchón, a chief in the village near the present town of Guadalupe ". . . a very high Indian chief . . . famous in all the Channel for his valor and for the damage which he had done there with his wars."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henshaw, 1879, pp. 307-309.

<sup>2</sup> Kroeber, 1925, p. 556.

<sup>3</sup> Bolton, 1930, p. 255.

<sup>4</sup> Priestley, 1937, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Bolton, 1930, p. 268.

Father Crespi noted ruined villages between Carpinteria and Santa Barbara, saying that these villages had been destroyed by mountain Indians. Other ruined villages were noted up the coast by Font.

That warfare has been continuous from the earliest Canalino until after the coming of the whites is adequately shown by remains in the ancient cemeteries, where countless skeletons are found with arrows embedded in the bones. There are also many cases where the skulls or other bones have been crushed before burial. Not as commonly found as might be expected, and not necessarily due to war, are broken bones which have healed during the life of their owners.

From the last remaining Indians in the region, all of which have now died, various students have secured information regarding the later wars. Most of this is of necessity sketchy. However, we may note that the Ventura Indians made war upon the Shoshones to the east, while Justo, the last of the Canalinos, reported to Dr. Lorenzo Yates<sup>1</sup> a few details of the war between Santa Barbara and El Rincon, which occurred when Justo was a small boy.

From various other sources, which by their complement support in a large measure Justo's description, the method of declaring and waging war was essentially this: Causes were numerous. A cause often mentioned is the refusal of a chief from one village to accept the invitation to a dance, feast or other celebration. This might be considered as a social snub, and the aggrieved party demanded war to remove the smirch. Another cause was the violation of a group's territorial integrity—a universal cause for war, even to this day. Each group had certain territory. If a neighboring group wished to cross, or to hunt in this area, they approached the chief and asked permission which, if granted, allowed them free access in return for a part of the spoils—generally ten per cent.

The method of declaring war was for the aggrieved party to send a messenger to the enemy, notifying him by a polite invitation to meet at a certain place on a certain date.

Both parties, painted and ready for battle, would meet and throw fine feathers in the air, accompanying the action by a peculiar war cry which used the sounds *ya, ya, ya, ya*, etc. with rapidly increasing cadence and culminating the cry with *Wu-Kap-pee!* The battle was opened when one Indian left the group and advanced, firing arrow after arrow at the enemy, who attempted to dodge. Another Indian then took his place. There were few casualties in this kind of fighting—three being killed in the Rincon battle. When either side had had enough, they built a fire which signalled that they were satisfied. This method of declaring war hardly conforms with the description given by Fages who stated that they spent the nights in terror. Doubtless there were exceptions.

Again the medicine man must have played an important part, for charm-stones, small cigar shaped stones described elsewhere, were regarded as charms against arrows. If the warrior bit the stone, it was believed to render him

<sup>1</sup> Yates, 1891, p. 373-376.

invisible. By proper ceremony and dances the charmstones were believed to go through the air at night and harry the enemy camp.<sup>1</sup>

Crime, as we know it, hardly existed. For theft of food or other things, the culprit was tried before the chief and sentenced to returning the stolen object or its equivalent. In the case of rape, marriage was required.

Quarrels between two men of a village were settled in the following manner: Two contestants stood up to one another and slapped each other with their "sweat sticks". When blood was drawn, the fight was over and the men became reconciled, regardless of the trouble.

### TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS

Both Fages and Cabrillo indicate a very limited group of occupations for these people. If, however, the many stone bowls, mortars, beads, fishhooks and other artifacts of stone, wood and bone are any criterion, they must have had numerous trades.

Both from the historical records and from excavations, it seems likely that a certain degree of specialization existed—one man making beads, another hunting, others plying their canoes in trade to the islands and for fishing. Fages mentions that some "grind red, white and blue paint clays, and a certain plum-biferous stones." Others engaged in the making of arrows which one writer described as an "infinite number." Woodworking, too, had its place, for the fine trays were fashioned of oak and alder roots. Spoons or ladles were doubtless made also, and Carpinteria received its name from the fact that canoes were constructed there.

The women's occupations included the making of trays, baskets and water bottles, as well as seed sowing, gathering of wood and food for its preparation.

Evidence that a certain amount of trade existed with other tribes is present in the shell heaps, where rocks and articles foreign to this district are found. Steatite is perhaps the foremost of these, having been brought from Santa Catalina Island in the sea going canoes. Quantities of obsidian are also found, which comes from the desert or northern California. Several pieces of pipestone from far off Minnesota have been found in this vicinity.

Font says they traded beads with the Mojaves and that he saw a cotton blanket, such as the Gila Pimas make, being worn by an Indian from Santa Cruz Island. Kroeber<sup>2</sup> says that it appears likely that the Chumash supplied the bulk of the shell money used in the southern portion of the state. This was the clam-shell disk bead currency, which was strung on strings and measured by means of the circumference of the hand.

In the Chumash territory a string the circumference of twice palm and fingers was worth approximately twelve cents, while the same string, to the

<sup>1</sup> Yates, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> Kroeber, 1925, p. 564-566.

Salinan, was worth four times that. Among the Maidu the value of this Canalino money was high, ranging from \$5.00 to \$25.00 as against twelve cents.

The Channel Indians were among the wealthiest of all California tribes. As wealth was measured by the amount of goods, the Canalino had much. Beads of shell served as money. These beads are not often found in Canalino graves. The value of this money was lowest near the coast, higher farther inland.

Strings of *Olivella* shell beads are common in the graves. Clamshell beads are seldom found. Kroeber says it is possible that these were burned in the burial ceremony and the less valuable *Olivella* beads buried with the body.

#### ENTERTAINMENT

That the Canalino were a pleasure loving people as well as industrious would appear from the quantities of decorative artifacts which they manufactured. Most of the early explorers were greeted and invited to the villages where feasts and dances were held. Little is actually known of either games or dances. We know that dances were of religious or ceremonial use, as distinguished from festivities, by the description of dances at funerals, for war, and rainmaking in connection with the shaman's rites with the charmstones. Font, Fages and others have described dances given when the white man arrived. In fact two villages were named by the Spaniards because of this activity. All we know of this dance is summed up by Fages<sup>1</sup> who says:

"The women go to them (the dances) well painted, and dressed as has been described (with antelope hide skirt), carrying in both hands bundles of feathers of various colors. The men go entirely naked, but very much painted. Only two pairs from each sex are chosen to perform the dance, and two musicians, who play their flutes. Nearly all the others who are present increase the noise with their rattles made of cane dried and split, at the same time singing, very displeasingly for us, who are not accustomed to distressing the ear with this kind of composition."

Whistles made of bone, both single and in groups like pan pipes, have been found in graves. Rattles made of shells, cemented with asphalt and containing a pebble, are also found. Cane or wooden rattles are of course not preserved in the ground.

In many villages a dance floor, or game field, is an important part of the village. This is a level packed section of the village in which games and ceremonies were held.

Numerous objects have been attributed to games, but as other purposes have also been suggested for many of these, their use remains in doubt. One game was played with a small wooden hoop which was tossed in the air, the players attempting to catch it with a spear-like stick.

A game, similar to our games of dice, was probably played by the women,

<sup>1</sup> Priestley, 1937, p. 36.





SANDSTONE BOWL

snail shells filled with asphalt being used and the score depending upon the number which remained upright when cast.

Guessing games were popular, and a game with marked sticks in which the sticks were allowed to fall, the score being counted by the marks, was popular further north.

#### LANGUAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Chumash language is of the Hokan linguistic family and is related to the Pomo, Salinan, Esselen, Yuman, Shastan, Yanan, Washoe and Karok. This relationship might be compared to the similarities between Spanish, Portuguese and Italian, all of which spring from Latin. These other Hokan tongues are scattered throughout the state.

Chumash was spoken in the region from San Luis Obispo to Malibu, and from the Islands to the Cuyama Valley. As is so often the case with native tribes, the name these people called themselves is unknown. They have been called the "Santa Barbara Stock", and "Chumash", an Indian name derived from the name of Santa Cruz Island. They have been divided into groups which correspond in part to geographic sections of the area and to the regions around each of the missions. These groups as listed by Kroeber<sup>1</sup> are: *Obispeño*, *Cuyama*, *Emigdiano*, *Purisimeño*, *Santa Ynez*, *Barbareño*, *Ventureño* and *Island*.

Of either the cultural relationship or dialects of the Cuyama and Emigdiano, little is known. Of the others, the Barbareños and the Islanders are best known culturally, and the Barbareños, Santa Ynez, Ventureños, and Obispeños best known for dialects. As might be expected, the Barbareños, Ventureños, and Santa Ynez are more closely related than to the Islanders who were more or less isolated. The Obispeño lived on the borderland of the Chumash territory and developed a dialect at greater variance with the others.

It is unfortunate that so little is known of the language and relationship of these people, but they had become extinct by the time competent ethnologists appeared, and the Missions appear to have preserved only a smattering of the language. Those who have contributed to this scant knowledge are Powell, Gatschet, Loew, Taylor, Portolá, Fages, Timmeno and Henshaw. Later, Harrington, Kroeber, Yates and Henley secured from living Indians parts of the language.

The sound of the language is similar in some respects to some of the Mexican Indians and to those of the Northwest Coast of Alaska and Canada. It contains many harsh gutturals and clicking noises made with the tongue. It is interesting to note that Father Crespi, while among the Haida Indians at Queen Charlotte Islands, remarked that their canoes appeared like those of Santa Barbara, and that the song they were singing was the same as was sung from San Diego to Monterey.

As the language was different in various parts of the California coast, and

<sup>1</sup> Kroeber, 1925, Plate I.

there is nothing to indicate that Crespi at the time understood the language, we must assume that the sound, rather than the words, reminded him of the south.

#### GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

From the Indians we have gained many names which, to the uninitiated, are often supposed to be of Spanish origin. Our knowledge is not complete enough to be authentic in all cases, so they will be listed here as those of supposed Chumash origin. Towns or districts: *Nipomo*, *Lompoc*, *Cuyama*, *Hueneme*, *Sisquoc*, *Mugu* (*Muwu*), *Malibu* (*Maliwu*), *Sespe* (*Sekspe*).

The well known *Nojoqui* falls, and a few names not so well known are: *Suey*, *Tepesquet*, *Cachuma*, *Tequepis*, *Chismaboo* Mountain, and *Quatral* Canyon.

Some of the village names recorded with a reasonable degree of certainty, but which are not retained today, are: *Humkaka* and *Shisholop* near Point Conception. *Anawupu*, *Onomyo*, *Mich'iy* near Gaviota, *Kasil* at Refugio, *Mikiw* and *Kuyamu* at Dos Pueblos, *Helo* on Mescalitan Island. *Ushtabash*, near the San Marcos road, and *Mitskanakan* near Ventura.

In the Cabrillo journal is a list of many villages pointed out to the explorers by the natives, from which many different correlations have been made with present names. *Shuku* or *Xucu*, as Cabrillo spelled it, has been listed as being at Santa Barbara, Carpinteria, Rincon, and Ventura. There is even some basis for supposing that it might be as far away as Long Beach.

As several authors have pointed out, it is difficult to correlate these names because of the apparent duplication. Harrington has said, for example, that the name he ascribes to Burton Mound in Santa Barbara appears four times in the Cabrillo account. Twice as *Ciucut*, as *Yutum* and *Xocotoc*. He says:<sup>1</sup>

"With regard to the spelling of the above forms, *Xocotoc*, *Ciucut*, and *Yutum*, it will be noted that *sy* is rendered by *x* (Eng. *sh*), *ci*, and *y*; the sound of Spanish *j* is represented by *c*, as is regular in the Cabrillo account, or not at all; *u* and *o* interchange; an echo vowel timbre is inserted after the *j*; and the final aspirated and somewhat decadent *n* is heard twice not at all and once as *m*."

#### FOOD

It is interesting to note that early pioneers in the desert region starved to death in a land in which the Paiute Indians are still securing food.

Santa Barbara, before the introduction of oranges, corn, beans, lettuce, potatoes and the various other foods which now grow here, would offer the ordinary white man about as barren a table as a trip back in the mountains would. Yet the Canalinos had plenty of food, as is attested by the remarks of the early ex-

<sup>1</sup> Harrington, 1927, p. 36.

plorers and the fact that this limited stretch of country supported upwards of 10,000 people.

From excavations of village sites, a great deal can be told of the food habits of the people. The remains of deer, seal, coyote, bear, and other mammals, as well as birds, and fish, show that they were utilized for food. The "shell heaps" are well named from the tons of seashells which were discarded after the contents had been eaten. Implements indicate traits in food, for a plentiful supply of mortars and pestles show that seeds of one kind or another were ground into meal.

Birds and eggs played an important part in the diet of the Canolinos. Seal, sea lion, swordfish, whale and innumerable fish were caught. Smaller land mammals, such as squirrels, rabbits, coyotes, were also used, and one of the favorite articles of food was bear cub. These cubs were captured in the mountains and kept until fat. Grown bears were sometimes killed, but these were more difficult to secure with the limited implements of the chase.

Trout were known as *machuro*, whitefish, corbins, spineback and jewfish were caught with nets, traps or spears, and with fishhooks of peculiar design. Smelt were caught by using ground up cactus as a chum, and then scooping up the fish with baskets.

Bows and arrows, darts used with the atlatl, or throwing stick, wooden clubs, clubs with stone heads, bolas (stone balls with grooves which were tied to a string and thrown), were used in the capture of game.

Fishhooks were of two types — an early type consisting of a straight barb of bone fastened to a wooden shank, and later a curved hook of shell or bone in which the curve turns in in such a way that the fish would have to swallow it in order to be caught. Traps and nets were also used, fragments having been found in excavations on the islands.

Plants of many varieties were utilized for food. Pine nuts, which we relish today, were relished then. Acorns were the staple, however. These were washed until all the bitterness was removed and the nut ground in the mortar to a flour, when it was mixed with water and eaten boiled or poured out on sand and allowed to dry.

Mountain cherry pits (*Prunus ilicifolia*) were made into tamales, called *islay*. Small seeds of Madroño and Manzanita were ground and the flour used to make tortillas or flat cakes.

A seed, like yellow rice, was abundant when it rained. This was prepared by roasting, then ground into flour and made into soups and bread. It is reported that this rice was much like vermicelli.

There is some confusion as to the use of mescal. The name *Mescalifilan* means "the place of mescal". The Indians are described as eating the plant which the Mexicans call "mescal", and yet there is no native mescal in this area, so that the plant referred to is probably *Yucca* or *Agave*. The young flower stalk was placed in a hole in the ground, filled with hot stones and covered with

earth for twenty-four hours. This was described as being juicy, sweet and as having a certain vinous flavor. *Tlatemado* was the word for "roasted".

The root of an unknown reed was crushed in mortars, then dried in the sun and the fibrous parts removed. From the remaining flour a nourishing gruel was made.

Celery, cresses and *Amaranthus californicus* were gathered and a flower similar to the wild rose, but smaller, which grew in swampy places and humid canyons was used.

Blackberries, strawberries, mushrooms and fruit about the size of a pear were eaten roasted or boiled. A tree described as whitish, like the fig but not as tall, was probably the California Buckeye, (*Aesculus californicus*).

Soap Plant, (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*) was used for soap and also roasted and eaten. An onion, called *cacomistli*, might have been Blue Dicks, (*Brodiaea capitata*), and was described as like a sweet potato.

*Cocanieta* was good raw and was called *capulin*. This is the plant we know as Ground Nut, or Rush Nut.

Laurel berries (*Umbellularia californica*) were toasted, but have a bitter taste. The seed of the cattail (*Typha latifolia*) was used for making pinole of a chocolate color. The roots were used to make a flour from which sweet pinole was made.

Chia sage (*Salvia columbaria*) formed an important food. The plant was set on fire, the button-like pods then ejecting a very oily seed which was called *pil* from which flour was made. Water and sugar were added to suit the taste and a copious gelatinous mass resulted. The taste is suggestive of linseed meal and is described as having great nutritious value and a sustaining quality. Desert people use it to improve the taste of bad water. Chia is also valuable as a remedy for gastro-intestinal disorders and for eye washes and poultices.

Sugar was produced from an olive-like fruit on a very heavy tufted shrub described as six feet high with reddish stem and leaves like that of the mangrove. (Mandroño, Manzanita?) Preparation consisted of separating the pulp from the seed and pressing it into baskets to make cakes of sugar when dry. The kernels of Mountain Cherry were also used for making *atole* or bread. Doubtless many other food plants were also utilized. Over one thousand species of food plants of the North American Indians are listed.<sup>1</sup>

All in all the Canalino fared much better for food than some of their neighbors who lacked the variety of food plants as well as the mammal and marine life.

Other Indians have found it necessary to carry on trade in foodstuffs, exchanging inland products for coast acorns or fish. The Canalino were so situated that little trade was necessary, other than a trade which was doubtless carried on with the islands, and perhaps to a limited extent with the interior.

<sup>1</sup> Yanovsky, 1936.

### CONCLUSION

Reading the past is much like reading an old magazine or newspaper from which the pages have been torn, smudged or are entirely missing. We have part of the story before us, but we do not know what went before. We become interested and, after a search, soon find another page, but whether it goes before or after, we may not be sure. Later another page comes to light which tells us the relation of the first two pages to one another, and eventually we learn a great deal of the story and can improvise some of the missing parts to get a more complete picture of the events.

Some of these missing parts will never be found. They have been destroyed by the many elements working against us — weathering, cultivation, vandalism and unscientific collecting.

Thus we have a general impression of the life of the Canalino. Many details are lacking. Some of these may become known in time; other details will never be known.



CANALINO BURIAL, MESCALITAN ISLAND

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